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APPENDIX.

XXIX.—*Semipalatinsk*. By N. ABRAMOF, Member of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society of St. Petersburg.

[Translated from the Journal of the Russian Geographical Society for 1861,
by JOHN MICHELL, Esq.]

Trade.—Semipalatinsk has long been celebrated for its commercial relations with the tribes of Central Asia. These relations existed in 1718, and in 1754 a frontier custom-house was established there.

The Russian and Tartar merchants of Semipalatinsk sell in the bazaars tea, sugar, other groceries, cotton stuffs, Chinese silks, porcelain, furs, wax, and honey. Although two fairs, from 25th May to 10th June, and 15th December to 1st January, were established in 1855, they are not frequented by merchants. The principal trade is carried on in the town during winter, when the Cossacks and peasants come in from the neighbouring stations and villages. As soon as the Irtysh is covered with ice, Kirghizes from the Ayaguz, and especially from the Kargeulinsk Steppe districts, bring to Semipalatinsk, on their camels, sheep and lamb skins, hides, camel-hair, ropes, and other commodities, which they dispose of to purchase grain, flour, tobacco, iron ware, and wooden boxes in return. During this season more than 1000 camels arrive at Semipalatinsk, and return with about 15,000 puds weight of corn.

The foreign trade of Semipalatinsk is carried on by Tartars and Tashkendians with the Kirghiz Steppe, Tashkend, Western Turkistan, Chuguchak, and Kuldja.

The articles exported to these places are black and red leather, manufactured in Semipalatinsk; cottons, woollens of brilliant colours, velvets, gold-lace, tinsel, watches, looking-glasses; iron, cast and wrought, manufactured and otherwise; and copper in sheets and pigs. Thin felts, sheepskins, and cattle, are brought in exchange from the Kirghiz Steppe. Cotton blankets and stuffs, silk "Khalats" (long robes), woollen carpets, fruit, and cotton, raw and in twist, are purchased at Tashkend; while from Kuldja and Chuguchak, tea, porcelain, silver in bars, silks, furs, looking-glasses, combs, &c. These articles are partly disposed of at Semipalatinsk, but the greatest quantity of them is sent to the Tumen and Irbit fairs, to Kazan and Moscow.

Since the cessation of the Russian trade in 1856, between Chuguchak and Kuldja, in consequence of the destruction of the Russian factory by fire, the export trade of Semipalatinsk has considerably decreased. In 1856 the value of goods despatched beyond the Irtysh amounted to 75,000*l.*, and the imports to 67,000*l.*

Chuguchak and *Kuldja* are situated at the western extremity of the Chinese empire, on the borders of the Kirghiz Steppe, which is subject to Russia. Chuguchak is distant 153½ miles from the town of *Ayaguz*,* and Kuldja 133½ miles from Kopal. Commercial relations between the neighbouring Siberian population and Western China have been already carried on for a long time. The Tashkendians, many of whom reside permanently at Semi-

* The Russian settlement on the River Urdjar is 87 miles from Ayaguz, while the distance from Urdjar to Chuguchak is 67 miles.

palatinsk, and Tartars constantly visited Chuguchak for trade; but all entrance was prohibited to Russians, who traded under the disguise of Tashkendians and other Asiatics. Between the years 1808-19, Lieutenant-General Glasenap, the commander of the Siberian division of the army, contributed much towards the extension of external trade. He organised ten regiments of the line, and nine batteries of field artillery, which were employed in subduing the Kirghiz marauders: these were at last reduced so completely to subjection that Russian caravans and even single individuals could proceed safely through the country without fear of encountering those robbers who had formerly limited and almost destroyed the commercial enterprise of Russian merchants.

It was during the administration of Glasenap, that Russian caravans first proceeded to Kokan and to the Chinese frontier towns of Chuguchak and Kuldja. The trade with Bukhara, Kashgar, and Cashmere, then gradually extended. The amicable relations with the Sultans of the Great Horde, the Dikokamenni Kirghizes, Kokan, and Bukhara, and the settlement of hitherto disputed points, further conduced towards the development of trade on the Siberian frontier.

Among others, General Glasenap despatched his interpreter, Putimsof, to Kuldja, in 1811, with the object of promoting trade. The information collected by him, and which was published in the *Siberian Journal*, is of a very interesting nature, inasmuch as it affords an account of that little-known part of the country which lies between the fortress of Bukhtarminsk and the Chinese town of Kuldja.

All trade was at first carried on by barter. Russia exported various manufactured goods, iron and leather; while China yielded principally tea, in leaf and bricks; also silks, porcelain, and soft furs. The subsequent appearance of gold on the bazaars had an injurious effect on the exchange of Russian goods. The Chinese willingly disposed of their wares for gold, allowing even on them a considerable discount for specie. The gold supplied at first consisted of Russian coins; but when the Chinese showed a preference for the unalloyed metal, gold in dust and bars formed the medium of exchange.

The Chinese demand for gold induced Russian merchants to enter into a profitable trade for supplying the bazaars with this commodity. Some Russian traders bought up the gold in a legal manner, at the Nijnenovgorod fair, at Moscow and St. Petersburg, to exchange it for Chinese goods; while others obtained it illicitly from the gold-diggings of the Kirghiz Steppe, in the neighbourhood of Chuguchak.

Such was the condition of Russian trade with Western China when the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs proposed to establish Russian factories within the Chinese territory. In August, 1851, a treaty was concluded between the Russian and Chinese governments, by virtue of which trade was sanctioned at Kuldja and Chuguchak between the subjects of the two empires on the following chief conditions:—

1. The merchants of the two empires exchange their goods and regulate the prices of them at their own option.

2. Russian goods brought to Kuldja and Chuguchak pay no duty to the Chinese Government, even when they pass into the hands of Chinese traders residing within the limits of the two towns; the goods likewise are not declared at Chinese custom-houses.

3. Russian merchants are allowed access to the towns from the 3rd April to the 22nd December; after which date all communication is prohibited until the following spring, owing to the removal during winter of the frontier troops, who examine the invoices supplied to caravans by the Russian Custom-house.

4. Russian Consulates are to be established at Kuldja and Chuguchak, and suitable accommodation provided for them. Buildings for the residence of

the merchants, as well as for warehousing Russian goods brought by Russian caravans, are to be attached to the consulates; the merchants will pay a small sum for the use of the warehouse.

5. The Russian and Chinese traders have free communication with each other for transacting business; but the former will not be allowed to walk in the streets or in the suburbs without a special written permission from the Consul.

6. A separate piece of ground is allotted for grazing the cattle belonging to the Russians.

7. When sheep are brought by Russian traders to Kuldja and Chuguchak, the native authorities have the right of exchanging two out of every ten, paying in return a piece of "daba" or cotton stuff for each sheep.*

8. The traders of both empires, when bartering their goods, are not to part with them on credit; should they do so, no complaint for the recovery of a debt can be entertained by the Russian Consul or Chinese Government.

The export to China of gold and silver in bars, dust, or specie, of firearms, gunpowder, opium, bank-notes, and bills, is prohibited.

In like manner the importation of bank-notes, brandy, and wine into Russia is interdicted.

In order that the Consul may enforce the proper observance of these regulations, each merchant is bound to declare to him, either at Kuldja or Chuguchak, the nature and quantity of the goods imported or exported; the traders are also to state through which customs-barrier their caravans will enter Russia. The Consul may examine the goods, if necessary.

The presence of the Russian Consuls at the factories put a stop to the open trade in gold; its contraband sale, however, could not be prevented. This forbidden trade was chiefly carried on by Tashkendians, who were not under the control of the Russian Custom-house and Consuls. They traded with Russian merchants, and fictitiously bought goods from these merchants in China, who had paid for them in gold; brought them to Semipalatinsk, where they were subjected to an increased rate of 20 per cent. above the ordinary duty, and finally handed them over to their proper owners. Chinese goods in this way were obtained considerably cheaper by the merchants who paid for them in gold, to the detriment of those who traded in the prescribed way—bartering goods for goods. To remedy this state of things, it was found necessary—1st, to establish a stricter watch over the gold-diggings in the Steppe, and particularly over Chalokazaks, or runaways of the Ayaguz district, who are the most active agents in the secret gold-trade, and who supply the Russian merchants with this gold for purchasing Chinese goods; 2nd, to levy a high rate of duty on all teas imported into Russia from China by foreign Asiatics, in order to stop the secret payments of gold to the Chinese; and 3rd, to invest the Russian Consuls with the power of recommending to the Russian frontier authorities the refusal of passes to individuals suspected of illicit trade in gold.

In 1854 the export of tea from Chuguchak by the Tashkendians was so great that a total stagnation in the barter of Russian goods at the factories ensued. Notwithstanding the variety and quantity of Russian goods on hand there at the end of 1853, the Russian merchants procured almost nothing in exchange during the first two months and a half of 1854.

The commercial transactions of the Tashkendians consisted, as already stated, in purchasing tea for gold of Russian coinage. When buying tea in this

* A piece of daba is valued at about 1s. 6d., but the price of a sheep is not less than 4s. 6d.

manner, the Tashkendians estimated 25 half-imperials* at one yamb, or $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of silver. The price paid by them for a box of tea of superior quality was 20 lams of silver, or about 6*l.* 10*s.*; and 18 lams, or 5*l.* 7*s.*, for a box of medium quality. The price of a box of tea at Semipalatinsk varies from about 19*l.* 10*s.* to 18*l.* 4*s.*, including a duty of 1*s.* 6*d.* per lb. The Tashkendians thus realised a profit of from 4*l.* 17*s.* to 6*l.* 10*s.* per box. The quantity of tea thus exported from Chuguchak during the course of one month may be estimated at about 1000 or 1500 boxes.

In 1856 the Russian trade with Chuguchak and Kuldja ceased, owing to the destruction by fire of the factory and all the goods it contained. In 1858, however, the Consulates were again established at these towns, and the Chinese agreed to pay an indemnity to the Russian merchants of 5500 boxes of tea during the course of three years.

The value and quantity of goods imported and exported through the Semipalatinsk Custom-house may be estimated by the following amount of customs dues levied on them during four years, from 1855 to 1859, deducting 4 per cent. as the cost of collection:—1855, 68,325*l.*; 1856, 9265*l.*; 1857, 9697*l.*; 1858, 8478*l.*

The trade between Chuguchak and Kuldja at the present time, when compared with the years 1854 and 1855, is in a state of decline from the following causes:—1st. In consequence of the increase of the duty on tea imported without consular certificates (by foreign traders), it is principally despatched to the Kirghiz Steppe; and, as the exorbitant duty imposed encourages smuggling, great quantities penetrate secretly into Russia. 2nd. Owing to the non-observance of the law prohibiting the export of gold and silver into China, arising from its licensed circulation in the Kirghiz Steppe, whence, through the absence of guards on the Chinese frontier, it passes easily into that empire. And 3rd. Since the re-establishment of regular commercial intercourse with China in 1858, the Russian trade with that country has not been properly developed, owing to a deficiency of the class of goods mostly demanded by the Chinese, and to the trade carried on in Russian goods by other Asiatics, who likewise supply the Chinese with gold and silver through Tashkend and the Kirghiz Steppe, whence the importation of the precious metals is not prohibited.

It will thus be seen that the Russian trade with Western China laboured in 1858 under very disadvantageous circumstances, and presented a gloomy prospect for the future. No improvement will take place in it until permission is granted for the exportation of gold and silver to Chuguchak and Kuldja, under regulations similar to those existing at Kiakhta. It is only by a reduction in the price of teas exchanged through the factories, a remission of customs duties, and by sanctioning the purchase of tea for part payments in ready money, that the competition for foreign Asiatics can be weakened, and the revenue of the Semipalatinsk Custom-house increased.

The following are the caravan-routes from Semipalatinsk:—1. to Chuguchak through the Ayaguz and Kokpektinsk districts to the southern slope of the Tarbagatai ridge; 2. to Kuldja and Kashgar, through the Ayaguz and Kapal districts; and 3. to Kokan, past Ayaguz, Karkaras, Aktau, across the river Chu, and through Tashkend.†

* A half-imperial is equal to 5 rubles, 15 copeks, or about 17*s.* English.

† For Semipalatinsk, see also Cochrane, Atkinson, and others.

The following Table of METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS shows the Highest and Lowest Degrees of Temperature from October, 1854, to January, 1860.

1854.			1858.		
	Max.	Min.		Max.	Min.
October	19·0	- 4·5	January	- 3·0	-29·5
November	5·5	-17·0	February	6·0	-25·0
December	0·7	-26·0	March	22·0	-12·0
1855.			April	25·0	- 0·3
January	- 2·7	-26·0	May	30·5	- 9·0
February	0·7	-25·0	June	29·0	- 8·0
March	13·5	-23·0	July	27·5	- 8·0
April	21·0	- 6·0	August	27·0	- 5·0
May	28·0	- 6·0	September	22·0	- 3·0
June	+27·5	+ 8·0	October	-16·0	- 8·0
July	+30·0	+ 8·0	November	8·0	-17·0
August	29·0	5·5	December	0·5	-39·0
September	22·0	2·0	1859.		
October	17·0	- 5·0	January	+ 2·5	-26·0
November	4·0	19·0	February	+ 3·0	-30·0
December	3·0	26·0	March	+10·0	-18·0
1856.			April	+22·0	- 5·0
January	- 1·0	-25·0	May	+25·7	- 0·0
February	2·5	-30·0	June	+28·0	- 5·0
March	5·0	-18·0	July	+27·0	- 8·0
April	18·5	-10·0	August	+28·5	- 4·0
May	25·0	- 1·5	September	+20·0	- 1·0
June	28·0	- 4·0	October	16·0	- 6·0
July	29·0	- 8·0	November	+ 8·7	-17·0
August	28·0	- 6·0	December	- 4·0	-26·0
September	23·0	- 3·0	<i>Mean Temperature for 1858.</i>		
October	14·0	- 6·0	Jan. - 13·82	July	16·31
November	5·3	-14·0	Feb. - 14·57	Aug.	13·75
December	3·0	-22·7	March - 11·30	Sept.	8·49
1857.			April 4·0	Oct.	2·08
January	- 4·5	-25·7	May 10·82	Nov.	2·08
February	4·0	-29·5	June 17·33	Dec.	12·47
March	3·0	-25·0	<i>Average Yearly Temperature.</i>		
April	10·0	-16·0	1·54		
May	-26·0	- 3·0	Average of—		
June	27·0	- 7·0	Winter	- 13·62	
July	29·0	- 9·0	Spring	+ 1·17	
August	30·0	- 5·5	Summer	+ 1·579	
September	25·0	- 3·3	Autumn	+ 2·82	
October	16·0	-17·0			
November	4·0	-21·5			
December	0·7	-24·7			